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## Representing Islam and Lisbon Youth

Portuguese Muslims of Indian-Mozambican origin

*Musulmans et Portugais. La jeunesse d'origine indo-mozambicaine à Lisbonne*

*Os Muçulmanos portugueses de origem Indo-Moçambicana.*

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## REPRESENTING ISLAM AND LISBON YOUTH

### *Portuguese Muslims of Indian-Mozambican origin*

While recent immigration from Muslim countries contributes to the diversification of Muslim life in Portugal, postcolonial people of Indian-Mozambican background continue playing a key role Islamic associational work. One example is the Youth Association of the Islamic Community (CilJovem) in Lisbon. Since September 11, its members are frequently asked to speak about Islam-related issues in the Portuguese media. Islam and Muslim-ness are important to them and they have become more engaged in Muslim activities at the international level. A study which compares cultural attitudes of these young Portuguese Sunni Muslims with those of non-Muslim peers reveals little difference: they are deeply attached to their city and home country and must also be seen as typical representatives of the middle class Lisbon youth.

#### *Musulmans et Portugais.*

#### *La jeunesse d'origine indo-mozambicaine à Lisbonne*

Alors que l'immigration récente en provenance des pays musulmans contribue à la diversification de la vie musulmane au Portugal, la communauté post-coloniale issue de l'émigration indo-mozambicaine joue un rôle essentiel dans le travail associatif. L'Association des Jeunes de la Communauté Islamique de Lisbonne (CilJovem) en est un exemple. Depuis le 11 septembre, ses membres sont souvent sollicités par les médias portugais pour parler des sujets relatifs à l'islam. Pour eux, l'islam et la musulmanité sont importants et ils s'engagent de plus en plus dans des activités musulmanes à un niveau international. Une étude comparative des attitudes culturelles de ces jeunes musulmans sunnites portugais et des non-musulmans révèle peu de différences : ils sont profondément attachés à leur ville et à leur pays et doivent également être vus comme représentatifs de la jeunesse de la classe moyenne de Lisbonne.

#### *Representando o Islão e a juventude lisboeta.*

#### *Os Muçulmanos portugueses de origem Indo-Moçambicana*

Apesar da imigração recente oriunda de países muçulmanos contribuir para a diversificação da vida muçulmana em Portugal, a população pós-colonial de origem indo-moçambicana continua a desempenhar um papel pivotal no trabalho associativo islâmico. Um dos exemplos é a Comissão de Jovens da Comunidade Islâmica (CilJovem) em Lisboa. Desde o Setembro 11 que os seus membros são frequentemente abordados para falar de assuntos relacionados com o Islão para os media portugueses. O Islão e o ser muçulmano são importantes para eles e tornaram-se mais envolvidos em actividades muçulmanas a nível internacional. Um estudo comparativo das atitudes culturais destes jovens portugueses sunitas com aqueles dos seus pares não-muçulmanos revela poucas diferenças : eles sentem-se profundamente ligados à sua cidade e país de origem, e devem ser também encarados como representantes típicos da juventude da classe média lisboeta.

“As a university student, how do you manage to pray five times a day?”, the young female reporter from a student’s quarterly in Lisbon asks Fátima<sup>1</sup>. Fátima is one of ca. 130 young Portuguese Muslims who meet in a grill restaurant located in a downtown shopping mall in Lisbon in early March 2006, a common occasion organised by the Youth Association of the Islamic Community Lisbon (CilJovem, *Comissão de Jovens da Mesquita Central*). “Well, I could do so if I wanted, I guess my teachers would respect that. But you better talk to Saiba, she prays five times a day, is that not so?”, she turns her head to her friends for confirmation. They also know that Saiba does so.

While an Indian Curry Chicken dish is served, the journalist crosses the room. It is easy to find Saiba among the more than 50 girls aged between twelve and approximately 28 years of age present here. She is one of the three young Muslima wearing a *hijab* (headscarf). The journalist is taking many notes, learning about the ritual of the five daily prayers which is part of Saiba’s daily routine, who explains:

“The timings of these prayers are spaced fairly evenly throughout the day, so that one is constantly reminded of God and given opportunities to seek His guidance and forgiveness: before dawn (*Fajr*), noon (*Dhuhr*), afternoon (*‘Asr*), sunset (*Maghrib*), and evening (*Isha*). Because of the rotation of the earth, the revolution of the earth around the sun, the tilt of the earth, the various latitudes of the earth’s locations, daylight saving time, etc. – the ‘times’ (according to the clock) for these prayers change from day to day and depend on location. Islamic prayer times were traditionally set according to the movement of the sun, not of the clock, and this is how they continue to be observed. Most communities publish prayer ‘schedules’ to keep track of the times, and specialised computer programs can also calculate the prayer times for each area, for each day of the year.”

Saiba’s dish remains untouched while she dedicates her full attention to the journalist’s questions, explaining what pertains to the ritual, quoting the *Qur’an*, sharing her Islamic knowledge. She provides a solid introduction into the rules and tradition of *salat* (Islamic prayer) to an interested outsider.

The young journalist’s aim is to write about Muslim university students. In order to find such students she has contacted the Central Mosque in Lisbon, and the Iman, Sheik Munir, had put her in contact with CilJovem. After some phone calls, she had been warmly invited by one of the organisers to participate at this dinner. She has also contacted me as a researcher familiar with the subject, so we met in front of the restaurant before lining up at the entrance, where a volunteer, to whom we provide some 11 euro for the complete meal, checked everybody’s names at the guest list. Apart from my own work of participant observation, talks and distributing a questionnaire among this group, I am partly witness to her interviews, what she does not mind, nor do her interviewees.

A scholar of Islamic studies could not have given a better lecture on Islamic prayer than Saiba does, who spans the historic bow from the Prophet’s time to the present day, indicating some web-links where to look up the exact prayer times for Lisbon, before the dessert arrives. So far, the journalist has certainly learned about some aspects of Islamic traditions and dogma. But I wonder if she

<sup>1</sup> All names of interviewees have been changed.

had learned about Saiba's life as a university student in Lisbon or her individual experience with and beyond this ritual. The Danish Cartoon controversy and the topic of "polygamy" are still on the reporter's list. While the friend sitting next to her takes over for polygamy, Saiba enjoys her cold chicken curry, letting me know that *'Asr* (the afternoon prayer), was her favourite one, "well, the most important for me at normal working days". By then she has been up for 12 hours already, needing a little break and some peace of mind after having attended her courses, and before dedicating herself to other tasks and a new part of the day, which include taking care of her younger sisters, helping her parents in their shop and preparing herself for tomorrow's classes. She takes her studies very seriously, and it helps her, "taking a few minutes, mostly by myself, to remember God and the greater meaning of our lives".

### The Group and context of the study

Since September 11, this group of young Portuguese Muslims hardly finds itself alone when meeting for leisure time activities and social events, such as bowling, dinners, excursions to the country side, 5-a-side football matches, or the popular rally through Lisbon to mark the beginning or end of Ramadan. At least between 4 and 8 events of this nature are organised each year by the *CilJovem* in Lisbon, attracting around 60 to 150 young people. Most of them are of South Asian origin and their parents came to Portugal from Mozambique (a Portuguese colony until 1975). Some also meet more frequently in a discussion forum in the Central mosque. The organisers describe the *CilJovem* as a non-profit religious, educational and cultural association dedicated to organising activities to promote interaction inside the Islamic Community and at the same time to build bridges between the Portuguese public and Portuguese Muslims. Apart from their full-time jobs, several members of its leading committee are additionally engaged in volunteer work, for example as members of the Zakat Association and/or in other volunteer welfare and assistance work.

They have adapted to the presence and curiosity of journalists and researchers and are aware of the importance of being open and available for their questions and responsibility this implies, namely being perceived (and acting) as representatives of the Islamic Community of Lisbon, if not Portuguese Muslims and/or Muslims in Portugal in general. And very often they are supposed to "speak for Muslims or Islam as such", urged to comment on international political events, conflicts, terror and affairs. Regarding the attention to Muslim and Islam related issues in the Portuguese public sphere, there are (apart from the new pattern of immigration) two aspects to highlight as influencing both public and academic discourses, and partly mutual the field. One is the (re-)discovery of the medieval past and positive (at times harmonic) revision of the history of Gharb al-Andalus. Several cultural events have been organised around this topic since the early 1990s, which now serves in official political discourse as quality proof of a "long tradition of multicultural conviviality"<sup>2</sup>. Interestingly, there is little or no participation

<sup>2</sup> This aspect is further developed in N.C. TIESLER, "Novidades do Terreno: Muçulmanos na Europa e o caso Português", *Análise Social* (Lisbon), XXXIX (173), 2005: 827-849.

by local Muslims in most of these events (such as folklore-focused Medieval Islamic Festivals), and it is surely the second aspect, the historical turning point of September 11, which has stronger immediate consequences for the Muslim population in Portugal (and elsewhere).

Just as in other European countries, Islam-related literature sells out, Arabic courses overrun, the number of converts has increased and the media have put "Islam and Muslims" at top of their agenda. The greater public interest in global issues which are constructed and seen as related to Islam is often mixed with a new interest in the local Muslim presence, and the young Muslims of CIL have meanwhile reached the age and maturity for stepping into the footsteps of the older community representatives at several occasions<sup>3</sup>.

They are accustomed to reacting and responding to remarks and questions which refer to their Muslim-ness and/or (however "Islam-related") topics and political events since they were school pupils: partly since the Rushdie affair in 1989, during the second Gulf War in the early 1990s or when they were called "Taliban" by non-Muslim pupils in the school yard. These experiences and the more recent practise of dealing with professionals and their questions has also improved their expertise, and some among them are more expert than others, in general or on specific topics. Over the past years, they have developed a kind of routine which does not only imply a certain patience to digest and respond to the same types and patterns of questions again and again.

"Meanwhile, I am already kind of positively surprised and in 'good hope' when it is not right away that the very first question refers to Osama Bin Laden", says Arifo, sharing his common experiences with journalists and often barely prepared university students. Part of the routine is also to rationalise the often frustrating outcome. While the way Muslims and Islam were seen by the Portuguese press before September 11 had already been problematic<sup>4</sup>, it had still been less polemic than in other European countries, partly due to opinion pieces by (or interviews with) Muslim leaders and intellectuals published on a regular basis<sup>5</sup>. Today, the

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<sup>3</sup> A recent example was the participation of one of the Cijovem leaders as "one of the experts in the audience" at the weekly TV-discussion forum "Pros & Contrás" (public channel RTP1), which had chosen September 11 as the topic for the programme aired on September 10, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> E.M. VON KEMNITZ, "Muslims as Seen by the Portuguese Press 1974-1999: Changes in the Perception of Islam", in W.A.R. SHADID & S.P. VAN KONINGSVELD (eds), *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: The Position of Islam in the European Union*, Leuven, Peeters, 2002: 7-26.

<sup>5</sup> The reasons why there was less tension about Muslim-related issues to be noticed in the Portuguese public sphere before September 11, compared to other European cases, are various. These reasons as well as the respective theory of the public marginalisation of the presence and participation of Muslims and Islamic communities in contemporary Portugal is developed in N.C. TIESLER, "No Bad News From the European Margin: The New Islamic Presence in Portugal", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (Abington Oxford, Routledge), XII (1), 2001: 71-91, and re-assessed in N.C. TIESLER, "Novidades do Terreno ...", *op. cit.* With regard to the history of Muslims in Portugal and the Portuguese Empire, and the construction of the category Muslim in Portuguese colonial and post-colonial contexts see AK. VAKIL, "Questões inacabadas: Colonialismo, Islão e Portugalidade", in M.C. RIBEIRO & A.P. FERREIRA (eds), *Fantasmagorias e Fantasias Coloniais no Imaginário Português Contemporâneo*, Porto, Campo das Letras, 2003: 255-294, as well as

space for self determined Muslim voices in the Portuguese media has certainly decreased, most noticeable probably since “March 11”, the day of the train bombing in neighbouring Madrid.

### *The Bigger Picture: Muslim communities, early and recent arrival*

For around thirty years, Islamic communities have represented the largest non-Christian religious minority in Portugal. Muslims in Portugal constitute a diverse phenomenon, in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic integration, and their religious affiliation in Islam<sup>6</sup>. The contemporary Muslim presence has no demographic linkage to the historical Islamic presence of Gharb al-Andalus but is largely the result of post-colonial movements of middle class Ismaeli and Sunni families of Indian/South Asian background who came from Mozambique in the early/mid 1970s, and of Fulas and Mandingas (at first, mainly male workers) from Guinea-Bissau who have arrived slightly later<sup>7</sup>. Like other cases of former European empire, the first Muslims who settled in the metropolis came for educational purposes *before* decolonisation – in our case from Mozambique: single male students from Sunni families of Indian origin. From the late 1950s, when these students joined Lisbon’s faculties of law, economics and medicine, up until today, when hundreds of Bangladeshis meet at the downtown square Martim Moniz, the Muslim population in Portugal has constantly increased.

Shortly after the revolution of the 25 April 1974, namely in May of the very same year, around 500 Muslims had arrived in Lisbon. In 1982 the Islamic Community of Lisbon (CIL, founded in 1968) counted 15,000 people who had left Mozambique. The second wave of immigration which shaped the Muslim presence in Portugal had its point of departure in Guinea-Bissau. The profile of

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AK. VAKIL, “From the *Reconquista* to *Portugal Islâmico*: Islamic Heritage in the shifting discourses of Portuguese historiography and national identity”, *Arqueologia Medieval* (Granada), 8, 2003: 5-16.

<sup>6</sup> For different Islamic groups and organisations see AK. VAKIL 2005, “Comunidade Islâmica em Portugal”, in F. CRISTOVÃO (ed.), *Dicionário Temático da Lusofonia*, Lisbon, Associação de Cultura Lusófona – Instituto Camões, 2005. A general introduction on Muslims in contemporary Portugal is by N.C. TIESLER, “Muçulmanos na Margem: A Nova Presença Islâmica em Portugal”, *Sociologia – Problemas e Práticas* (Lisbon), 34, 2000: 117-144. See also S. SOARES LOJA, “Islam in Portugal”, in S.T. HUNTER (ed.), *Islam, Europe’s Second Religion: The new social, cultural and political Landscape*, New-York, Praeger, 2002: 191-203.

<sup>7</sup> An extensive study on migrants from Guinea-Bissau and their communities is by F.L. MACHADO, *Contrastes e Continuidades. Migração, Etnicidade e Integração dos Guineenses em Portugal*, Oeiras, Celta, 2002. As for Guinean Muslims see E. COSTA DIAS in this volume and M. ABRANCHES, *Pertenças Fechadas em Espaços Abertos. Estratégias de (re)Construção Identitária de Mulheres Muçulmanas em Portugal*, dissertação de mestrado, Lisbon, Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa (ISCTE), 2004. About people of Indian descent and their communities see J.M. MALHEIROS, *Imigrantes na Região de Lisboa: Os Anos da Mudança, Imigração e Processo de Integração das Comunidades de Origem Indiana*, Lisbon, Colibri, 1996; M. MALHEIROS, “Circulação migratória e estratégias de inserção local das comunidades católica, guesa e ismaelita. Um interpretação a partir de Lisboa”, *Lusotopie* (Paris, Karthala), 2000: 337-398. An account on the Ismaeli community with special focus on women is by F. KESHAVJEE, *A Mulher Muçulmana em Portugal: processos psicossociológicos de diferenciação entre os sexo*, tese de mestrado em psicologia social e das organizações, Lisbon, ISCTE, 1996.

this second type of Muslims arriving from the late 1980s is different, with only a very small number of students (which is also due to the different age group); it was rarely families who came together, but mainly young men looking for labour in civil construction – and finding it in and around Lisbon and the Algarve. In the 1980s, the number of Muslims of Indian descent was overtaken by Muslims hailing from Guinea-Bissau. With the immigration from Guinea-Bissau, the number of Muslims doubled to approximately 30,000 until the beginning of the 1990s<sup>8</sup>.

Immigration to Portugal, which still remains a “country of emigration”, has taken place over decades, perhaps even centuries, with some exceptions closely linked to the country’s role as a (former) colonial empire. Immigration patterns in Portugal changed in the beginning of the 1990s and respective policies and academic research now contrast the ongoing immigration from the ex-colonies with the strongly increasing immigration from Eastern Europe and countries which do not make part of the Schengen treaty<sup>9</sup>. This small country at the Western European margin (population ca. 10 Million) has now become a ‘promising destination’ for migrants who aim to escape economic poverty through joining one of the wealthy countries of the European Union. This means that more “new” immigrants without any colonial connections to Portugal (and hence not Portuguese-speaking and facing greater obstacles in attaining permanent residence status) than ever before arrived and/or had been registered in Portugal, partly in the course of several legalisation campaigns carried out by the Portuguese government from 1991/1992 onwards. While immigration from Portuguese speaking African countries and Brazil continues, most of the “new” immigrants hail from Eastern European countries, and, to a lesser extent, from Morocco, Senegal, Bangladesh and Pakistan<sup>10</sup>. Most of the latter have joined in existing infrastructures of the still overwhelmingly lusophone (Portuguese speaking) Islamic communities which are mainly concentrated in and around Lisbon. Thus the total Muslim presence is currently estimated by researchers and the communities themselves as around 38,000<sup>11</sup>. Though some 60% of them are Portuguese citizens, the percentage is lower for those of Guinean origin.

<sup>8</sup> AK. VAKIL, “Comunidade Islâmica...”, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> M.d.C. ESTEVES, *Portugal, País de Imigração*, Lisbon, Instituto de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento (IED), 1991; J.G. BASTOS & S.P. BASTOS, *Portugal Multicultural*, Lisbon, Fim de Século, 1999; R. Pena PIRES, “Mudanças na Imigração. Uma análise das estatísticas sobre a população estrangeira em Portugal, 1998-2001”, *Sociologia – Problemas e Práticas* (Lisbon), 39, 2002: 151-166; FORUM GULBENKIAN IMIGRAÇÃO 2006/2007, F.L. MACHADO & A.R. MATIAS, *Bibliografia sobre Imigração e Minorias Étnicas em Portugal (2000-2006)*, Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2006, 115 p., <[www.gulbenkian.pt/v1/attachs/BIB-FCG%20Completa71735781.pdf](http://www.gulbenkian.pt/v1/attachs/BIB-FCG%20Completa71735781.pdf)>.

<sup>10</sup> The particular case of Muslims from Bangladesh is approached by J. MAPRIL “‘Bangla asd-jid’: Islão e bengalidade entre os bangladeshianos em Lisboa”, *Análise Social* (Lisbon, Instituto de Ciências Sociais – ICS), XXXIX (173), 2005: 851-873, and MAPRIL in this volume. For Moroccan immigrants see R. Gomes FARIA in this volume.

<sup>11</sup> The numerical estimation includes the Nizari Ismaeli Community which counts some 8,000 people.



### *Islamic associations and “the parents”*

The vast majority of young Muslims who comprise the subject of our study are children of the Muslims of South Asian origin who came to Portugal from Mozambique and established the first Islamic associations in contemporary Portugal. In this process, the role of a small group of Muslims, who were studying at the faculties of law, medicine and economics in the metropolis, was decisive. According to their intellectual, diplomatic and social capacities, this group (as well as their Ismaeli co-religionists) can be seen as “integration figures” of contemporary Islam in Portugal – and partly they remain in the leading committees of the communities up to the present day. The little Islamic infrastructures served as an anchor for thousands of Muslims arriving among hundreds of thousand people who came/returned from the colonies during the chaotic post-revolution period. Today, the Central Mosque or local Islamic communities continue to be on top of the address-lists of Muslims who have recently arrived in the country, trying to find their way through the bureaucratic jungle of registration.

Most of these community founders as well as other Sunni Muslims of South Asian origin had been Portuguese citizens already under colonial rule. Consequently, they did not perceive themselves as “immigrants” but as “retornados”, a category which was used to name other Portuguese nationals (although white and Catholic) who came (back) from the colonies, struggling to re-establish an existence under rather complicated conditions<sup>12</sup>. And despite the fact that these Portuguese Muslims are until today categorised by public (and partly academic) discourse in Portugal as part of the “foreign population”, many among them still speak of Portugal as “the country which received us”. Muslim families of Indian/South Asian origin, mainly of middle class background, who had to leave Mozambique in the course of post-independence Africanisation policies and due to civil war, coped rather well with integrating into the labour market or re-establishing their businesses in Portugal. They had been well established as traders or in higher sectors of employment in Mozambique, working in traditional and modern activities (mainly commerce and banking). With regard to occupation and employment, people from Mozambique have been found to be exceptional among migrants from the Portuguese Speaking African Countries (Palop)<sup>13</sup>. The percentage of (proto-)middle class people is slightly lower among Moroccans and Bangladeshis and significantly lower among Muslims who came from African countries.

Although many African Muslims gather around and are closely linked to their Sufi leaders, and Muslims from Bangladesh have recently founded a prayer hall closer to their workplace, the vast majority of at least ca. 30,000 Sunnis and their local communities are linked to and occasionally take part in the life of the central Islamic Community of Lisbon (CIL). While the question of “representativity” remains a controversial issue between state and Muslim organisations (and among the latter) in some other European countries, in Portugal the CIL, founded in 1968, acts as an umbrella organisation in formal and informal ways for Sunni

<sup>12</sup> R. Pena PIRES *et al.*, *Os Retornados: Um Estudo Sociográfico*, Lisbon, IED, 1984, 1987.

<sup>13</sup> M.I. BAGANHA, “Legal Status and Employment Opportunities: Immigrants in the Portuguese Labor Market”, *Oficina do CES* (Coimbra), 139, 1999.



Muslims. As for the distinct spiritual movements, schools and traditions, one must at least note the *Tabligh Jamaat* and *Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jamaat*, and furthermore, the Islamic brotherhood groupings among Guinense Muslims, the *Mourides* from Senegal, and some Sufis<sup>14</sup>.

Regarding Islamic infrastructures, there are two more “representative” mosques near Lisbon (Laranjeira and Odivelas) besides the Central Mosque (inaugurated in 1985), and another in Coimbra. Furthermore, a recognised, private primary and secondary Islamic School (frequented also by some non-Muslim pupils) in Palmela (near Lisbon); some further twenty cultural centres and prayer halls exist from North to South (but mainly near Lisbon), alongside around twelve madrasas, at least six halal butcher shops and nine halal restaurants, and three edited journals/newspapers (apart from grey literature). Among other religious groups, Muslims also take part in a TV programme (public channel), where the presentation time is divided according to the numerical strength of the communities (in practise, mostly occupied by the Catholic Roman Church and by Protestant and Pentecostal churches, coming second).

Alongside common religious, cultural and social infrastructures (including a book-store, chatrooms or the community website), three associations were founded under the rooftop of the thirty year old Central Mosque in the heart of Lisbon, belonging to CIL (which reaches beyond the Central mosque): the Women’s Association, one of Guinean Muslims and the CilJovem which was founded in 1992.

### *The quantitative survey*

Working with a particular group of young Muslims in a framework of a broader research project on transnational circuits and concepts of home and belonging among Muslims in Portugal, we have undertaken a study which allows a comparison of cultural attitudes, mobility and future aspirations of the young Portuguese Muslims of CIL with a larger group of young Portuguese non-Muslims<sup>15</sup>. The quantitative survey encompassed a total of 241 young people, all Portuguese citizens, mostly between the ages of 16 and 26 of middle class background and living in Lisbon, where most of them were also born. The survey focused on key

<sup>14</sup> AK. VAKIL, “Comunidade Islâmica...”, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> The comparative quantitative survey was realised between November 2005 (young non-Muslims) and March 2006 (young Muslims) as a joint action of two different projects: N.C. TIESLER analyses family histories of three generations of South Asian Muslims with triple migration experience under the title “Muslims in Portugal: Religion, Collective Subjectivity and Shifting Perceptions of Home and Belonging”, while Cairns focuses on attitudes towards mobility among diverse young people in Lisbon in his project “Culture, Youth and Future Life Orientations”. An extensive analyses of the quantitative data of this joint study on Portuguese youth is by N.C. TIESLER & D. CAIRNS, “Little Difference? Young Muslims in the Context of Portuguese Youth”, Lisbon, ICS Working Paper, 8, 2006, <[www.ics.ul.pt/publicacoes/workingpapers/index.htm](http://www.ics.ul.pt/publicacoes/workingpapers/index.htm)>. A short English article on the same subject is foreseen in N.C. TIESLER, “Happy at Home & Going International: Young Portuguese Muslims”, *ISIM Review* (Leiden, International institute for the study of Islam in the modern world), 19 (forthcoming: Spring 2007). Both projects are funded by post-doctoral research fellowships provided by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) in Lisbon, and are hosted at the Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa (ICS-UL).

issues in their lives, including questions on family and peer relationships, work, study and leisure. Of the two groups of young people who were surveyed, 200 were from higher educational institutions (coincidentally, there was no Muslim among this sample, but 9% who's parents had come to Portugal from Portuguese Speaking African countries) and 41 Muslims (of a total of ca. 160) involved with the Youth Association.

### *Family and Friends*

The majority live in the parental home (68% of non-Muslims and 80% of the Muslims), and all agreed that it was "good to live with their parents," the young Muslims somewhat more so (Muslims: 86%, non-Muslims: 68%). From surveying existing literature on Portuguese youth, and indeed European youth, it is evident that the family is of paramount importance in the everyday lives of young people, with peer relationships also being of major significance<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, recent statistics demonstrate that greater numbers of young people are staying within the family home for longer periods across Europe<sup>17</sup>; recent studies on youth in Portugal and other regions of Europe confirm this trend<sup>18</sup>.

Regarding peer relationships, it has been established elsewhere that friends can play an important role in social support; often, the only people aware of a young person's emotional burdens and stressful circumstances are close peers and when compelled to react to these circumstances, for many it is them that they turn for help, safety, and relief. The majority of the young people surveyed in this context value their friends to the extent that they would feel uncomfortable without them: 80% of non-Muslims and 74% of the young Muslims. These friendships are also extremely durable. The majority of these young people not only have the same friends they had during childhood, 64% of non-Muslims compared to 86% of young Muslims, but they also anticipate having the same friends in the future: 84% of non-Muslims and 87% amongst the young Muslims. More young people from the non-Muslim sample also thought having friends was more important than their job: 67% compared to only 42% of young Muslims<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> See for instance M.d.D. GUERREIRO & P. ABRANTES, "Moving into adulthood in a southern European country: transitions in Portugal", *Portuguese Journal of Social Science* (Lisbon), III (3), 2004: 191-209; L. PAPPÁMIKAIL, "Intergenerational relationships, family support and the transition of young people to adult life in Portugal", *Sociologia – Problemas e Práticas*, 47, 2004, and J.M. PAIS, D. CAIRNS & L. PAPPÁMIKAIL, "Jovens europeus: retrato da diversidade", *Tempo Social* (São Paulo), XVII (2), 2005: 109-140.

<sup>17</sup> For more background on this theme see R. BENDIT, W. GAISER & J.H. MARBACH, (eds), *Youth and Housing in Germany and the European Union. Data Trends on Housing: Biographical, social and Political Aspects*, Leske-Budrich, Opladen, 1999, and M. IACOVOU & R. BERTHOUD, *Young People's Lives: a Map of Europe*, Colchester, University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> See for example A. BIGGART & D. CAIRNS, *Families and Transitions in Europe: Comparative Report*, Coleraine, University of Ulster, 2004, and J.M. PAIS & L. PAPPÁMIKAIL, *Families and Transitions in Europe WP 3 and 4: Portugal*, Lisbon, ICS-UL, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> In the non-Muslim sample, this trend was more prevalent amongst males, 74% compared to 61% of females, but vice versa in the young Muslim group, with only 38% of males agreeing compared to 47% of females.

### *Study and Work*

A number of indices regarding study and work were included in the questionnaire to explore the significance of both of these areas in the lives of the young people surveyed. Large numbers of young people who stated that they liked to study (74% for the non-Muslim sample and 80% of young Muslims) were present, and overall, more males disliked studying, 34% compared to 17% of all females; largely negative appraisals of the Portuguese education system were also made: only 14% in the non-Muslim sample of young people and 28% of young Muslims thought that Portugal has a good education system; this is an interesting dichotomy in respect to the degrees of negativity on display if we take into account the fact that these young Muslims, via travel and family relationships outside of Europe (mainly in Mozambique), are more likely to be able to take other countries' educational systems into comparison.

Regarding their future working lives, equally high numbers of young people from both groups thought it "would be" good to work abroad (88%) – which does not mean that they are actually having concrete plans for leaving the country. There was however a major discrepancy concerning working outside Lisbon: while majorities in both groups would like to work elsewhere in Europe (80% in the non-Muslim sample and 76% of the young Muslims), only 29% of the young Muslims, in contrast to 57% of the non-Muslim young people, wanted to work elsewhere in Portugal; young Muslim males were however more strongly predisposed towards working elsewhere in Europe (95%, including 53% with very strong inclinations to do so) than their female Muslim counterparts (59%, with only 12% strongly inclined), while young Muslim females were more likely to preference working elsewhere in Portugal (38% compared to 23% of males).

Both groups of young people were however in agreement with the fact that salaries are too low in Portugal: 81% and 84% respectively. It is interesting to note that among the young Muslims, significantly more females than males agreed that salaries with this notion, with 100% of young Muslim women in agreement, compared to 83% of the young Muslim men, while for the non-Muslim group of young people, the gender difference is less pronounced on this question. Both sets of young people also feared unemployment, 74% in both groups, with women in both samples more apprehensive: 84% beside 60% of men in the non-Muslim sample and 82% of women compared to 68% of men in the young Muslim group.

### **Little Difference: Lisbon Youth is "happy at home"**

What emerged was that generally, across the board and despite what are perceived to be difficult economic circumstances in Portugal, particularly in relation to the labour market, these young people are content with their lives. All of them expressed quite critical views on the education system, salaries and employment options in Portugal. Furthermore, a number of psycho-social scales were included to provide some indication of the feelings of personal well-being amongst these young people. On three measures (fatalism, internal locus of control and motivation), we find that many of these young people believe strongly that they have the power to shape their own futures, i.e. that they will be successful in life through

their own efforts rather than leaving things to chance. They are indeed highly motivated to succeed and rather than trust in luck or chance, they believe they can control their own future life courses. At a more personal level, self-esteem was also measured. We have discovered that the majority of these young people are generally happy being the people they are, with strong levels of self-esteem found across the board, albeit slightly more so for the young Muslims. Putting these indices into context, while based upon the subjective judgements of the young people themselves, we can see that the very strong family and peer relationships previously uncovered foster strong feelings of personal well-being, despite negative appraisals of objective circumstances in Portugal.

*Young Portuguese Muslims: broader horizons – but less ready to migrate*

In relation to the future, rather than pursue future trans-national life trajectories, overwhelming majority of both samples also plan to spend the rest of their lives in Portugal. While the overall picture demonstrates little difference between the young Muslims and non-Muslims, some interesting differences may be noted.

A number of questions were posed regarding the leisure habits of these young people, concentrating upon one area of particular relevance to Portuguese youth: holidays. While surveying young people on such an issue may seem somewhat trivial, holidays are central to the cultural lives of Portuguese youth and, with so many of these young people living with their parents, they are important in terms of providing an arena in which to express personal freedom<sup>20</sup>. The responses to these questions also provide us with vital indices of geographical mobility in the lives of these young people.

Both groups of young people were clearly interested in foreign travel. In the last 12 months, 46% of the non-Muslim sample and 74% of the young Muslims had travelled outside Portugal at least once, while in previous years, 74% of non-Muslims and 70% of the young Muslims had enjoyed foreign travel. Gender differences were also observed within both samples; in the non-Muslim sample, more males than females had taken trips abroad in the past year, while amongst the young Muslims, this trend was reversed.

It was also noticeable that between the two groups of young people, destinations did vary somewhat, with the non-Muslim young people preferring nearby European destinations, most notably Spain, while the young Muslims tended to venture further, particularly to the Middle East (United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia), South Asia (India and Pakistan) and Africa (Mozambique, principally to visit family). Additionally, as expected, the young Muslims were the only group to undertake pilgrimages to Mecca (12% having done so at some point in the past, with a further 5% wishing to do so in the future). It should be noted that there were no explicit questions on this subject of religious pilgrimages and that the subject of “Mecca” was raised by the young people themselves. It should also be noted that a small number of young Muslims, specifically females, had recently

<sup>20</sup> For further elaboration on this theme, see D. CAIRNS, *Famílias, Futuros e Férias: uma investigação provisória sobre juventude e mobilidade em Lisboa*, Conference Paper, Lisbon, ICS-UL, 2006.

married and made visits abroad in regard to making preparations for weddings, principally to England, and subsequently took honeymoons; Tunisia was a particularly popular destination in this latter respect. The former trend also helps account for the higher number of Muslim women taking trips abroad.

The young Muslims are somewhat more globally-orientated in their readiness to travel to other countries for educational purposes, in language competence, travel horizons and (virtual) communication, including political engagement on Muslim matters: single representatives of the CilJovem, for example, took part in the Asma Society's international MLT programme meeting held in Copenhagen in July 2006<sup>21</sup>.

On the other hand, they are even less predisposed than other young Portuguese people to leave Portugal for longer periods, whether it be for better employment or to engage in a relationship with someone living abroad. This is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, these ambitious and work and study committed young people are aware that options regarding future life career plans look more promising outside Portugal and that geographical mobility would improve their opportunities. Secondly, migration trajectories and relationships with other South Asian and Portuguese Muslims (partly family relatives) in the UK (which they consider more "emancipated in Muslim matters") are well-established.

Furthermore, ethnic and racial discrimination are part of daily life experience, and the specific historical context of the "War on Terror", within which this study was undertaken has created an atmosphere wherein Islamophobic voices have tended to drown out Muslim voices – including in Portugal, where before September 11 there was less empirical evidence of anti-Muslimness or tension between majorities and the Muslim minority than in other European countries. These young people, whose parents' biographies are marked by migration, are not ready to leave their home country, with an overwhelming majority wanting to always live in Portugal (81%, compared to 68% in the non-Muslim sample).

### *Young Muslims in the context of Studying Youth*

Regarding the issue of religious attachment, one clearly has to bear in mind that we have not compared this group of Muslims – which takes part and manages an Islamic Youth association – with another group of young people who are organised in a religious community. We need to take this methodological limitation into account when we state that 44% of the young Muslims attend religious services on a weekly basis (65% males, 19% females) in comparison only 9% of non-Muslims doing the same.

According to other studies on Portuguese youth and our ethnographic experience with other groups of young Muslims in Portugal and "outside typical Muslim spaces", the latter (for instance Sunni Muslims from Guinea-Bissau or Ismaelists who also came from Mozambique) generally give more importance to religion than their non-Muslim peers<sup>22</sup>. Apart from their stronger religious attachment and

<sup>21</sup> American Sufi Muslim Association/American Society for Muslim Advancement's international "Muslims Leaders of Tomorrow" programme, <[www.asmasociety.org/mlt2006](http://www.asmasociety.org/mlt2006)>.

<sup>22</sup> For Muslim young women of Indian and Guinean background, see M. ABRANCHES "Mulheres muçulmanas em Portugal: formas de adaptação entre múltiplas referências", in SOS RACISMO

broader international and travel horizons (only 45% of them prefer to spend holidays in Portugal compared to 78% of the non-Muslims) we have found such little difference concerning cultural attitudes among these young middle class people that it has sometimes been difficult to distinguish the findings of the two samples. This includes, for instance, the finding that 78% of both groups “prefer beach holidays” as their leisure time options, which is indeed “very Portuguese”.

In a general discursive context where religious belonging and cultural attitudes are often not differentiated, and where a strong attachment to Islam is often wrongly presented as opposed to or apart from the dominant culture or active Western citizenship, we have consciously chosen this group of religiously dedicated and socio-politically active Muslims for our comparative study: young people who consider Islam and Muslim-ness important matters in their daily life.

As with other national and regional contexts, studying (Muslim) youth in Portugal presents particular challenges in respect to what to study and indeed whom to study; as Linda Herrera has argued in an editorial of *ISIM Review*, Youth (in general) has long been treated as a social problem:

“Much of the scholarly and media attention to youth, particularly from the ‘global North’, has focussed on issues such as juvenile delinquency, unemployment, drug abuse, and high-risk sexual behaviour. The situation, however, has been changing. Notwithstanding the persistence of – and continued attention to – the older problems, newer areas also underline the youth as agents of change, creators and consumers of new technologies, trend-setters in the arts, music fashion, and innovators of new forms of political organisations and social movements towards greater social and economic justice.”<sup>23</sup>

In other words, when studying young people, we need to focus on the everyday life experiences of the mainstream rather than the exceptional experiences at the fringes if we are to advance our understanding of contemporary youth and avoid misrepresenting our subjects. Furthermore Herrera comments that in relation to representations of Muslim youth, the emphasis tends to be upon issues of security, religious extremism and violence, thus “reinforcing a single-minded approach to youth” (*ibid.*). This research aimed to counter such reinforcements by applying to young Muslims the same perspectives as those used in the area of “mainstream” Youth Studies to which Muslims in Portugal (and elsewhere) surely belong. Therefore, in this step of research the young Muslims surveyed have not been addressed as “young Muslims,” but rather as young people irrespective of their religious background.

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(ed.), *Imigração e Etnicidade. Vivências e Trajectórias de Mulheres em Portugal*, Lisbon, SOS Racismo, 2005: 149-180; for mainly Ismaeli women see F. KESHAVJEE, “A Índia em Portugal: Concepções culturais da mulher islâmica”, *Encontro Sobre Portugal e a Índia*, Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2000: 137-144. A comparative study on young Ismaelis and Sunnis of South Asian origin and Sunnis from Guinean background is by S.P. BASTOS & J.G. BASTOS, *Filhos Diferentes de Deuses Diferentes*, Research Report, Lisbon, Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Minorias Étnicas (ACIME), Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Centro de Estudos de Migrações e Minorias Étnicas (CEMME), 2005.

<sup>23</sup> L. HERRERA, “Editorial”, *ISIM Review*, 16, 2005: 4.

Muslims and their cultural attitudes, eventual socio-political engagement and social mobility, are hardly ever discussed in a normative context, i.e. emphasising similarities rather than contrasts, with non-Muslim minority and majority groups of the same age, gender, class, migratory and/or educational backgrounds<sup>24</sup>. In terms of analysis, this deficiency often leads to a disproportionate “Islamicization” of the subject (Muslims), and strengthening of the Islamicization of public (and academic) discourses<sup>25</sup>: in short, nearly everything and anything these Muslims do, think, affirm or negate appears as deriving from their Muslim-ness, i.e. as an Islamic particularity, which may in fact not be the case at all. Economic and social aspects, class, gender and educational background, the impact of particular experiences in a specific historic context (e.g. social mobility or social exclusion in a European society) as well as similarities and continuities with non-Muslims or people of similar migratory experience are therefore often overlooked.

And still, accordingly to our ethnographic experience, it is indeed important to note that these young Muslims use their “Muslim-ness” as a “social capital” type resource in making the transition to adulthood. But to see such capital as an essentialist property is problematic, since, at least in the case of Portugal, there are these other influences to consider, most notably, what could conceivably be termed their “Portuguese-ness.” This should not come as any surprise, since young Muslims socialise with young non-Muslims in everyday life contexts unrelated to Islamic community life in school, university, professional life, leisure activities or socio-political engagement and self-perceptions and senses of belonging do not refer exclusively to ethnic or religious bonds.

## Representing Lisbon Youth and Islam

Despite the little difference across the board of our survey which consciously excluded Islam-related issues, differences in daily life experience of young Muslims and non-Muslims can hardly be overlooked in Western societies, especially in times of the “Global War on Terror” – a war which as one Muslim in Portugal sardonically noted “some of us are less allowed to forget than others”<sup>26</sup>. Among the

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<sup>24</sup> Among the enormously increasing quantity of studies on young Muslims in Western societies during the last years, there is also an increasing number of high quality studies, for example G. CRESSEY, “Diaspora Youth and Ancestral Homeland: British Pakistani /Kashmiri Youth Visiting Kin in Pakistan and Kashmir”, *Muslim Minorities* (Leiden, Brill), 5, 2006. Early exceptions were partly made in C. VERTOVEC & A. ROGERS (eds), *Muslim European Youth: reproducing ethnicity, religion, culture*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998. See also O. ROY, “Muslims in Europe: From Ethnic Identity to Religious Recasting” (*ISIM Newsletter*, 5, 2000), who compared cultural attitudes of Muslim peer groups in the French Urban peripheries with other local young urban subcultures. As for a critique on methods and perspectives see M.G. KHAN, “From another shore – Ethical pimping”, *The Muslim News* (Harrow, UK), 212, December 22, 2006, [www.muslimnews.co.uk/paper/index.php?article=2758](http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/paper/index.php?article=2758).

<sup>25</sup> This is elaborated in N.C. TIESLER, *Muslims in Europa: Religion und Identitätspolitik unter veränderten gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen*, Münster-Berlin, Lit-Verlag, 2006: 124-172. See also S. ALLIEVI, “How and Why ‘Immigrants’ became ‘Muslims’”, *ISIM Review*, 18, 2006: 18.

<sup>26</sup> At the conference on “Social Movements in Islamic Contexts: Anthropological Approaches” held at ISCTE in Lisbon, 5-6 June 2006, AbdoolKarim Vakil (King’s College, London)



immediate consequences for Muslim citizens and residents at the level of everyday life is the experience of being subject to public suspicion and verbal attack, and, more specifically, also to a harsh alienation of their self-perceptions of being Muslim and Portuguese (which most of them are) due to the logic of public discourses where Islam is in general seen as the foreign, “the Other”, the threat, etc., and where the War on Terror underwrites a political jargon where the distinctions between “Islam” and “Terror” are slyly confused.

After having been largely overlooked during the last decades, Muslims in Portugal have become subjects of a new curiosity and the “object of studies” of the local academia. But the framework for their comments and contributions, the nature of the questions they invited and “allowed” to respond to, is more than ever limited by others and determined by the War on Terror. Although national particularities and history have an impact, these experiences, including the felt necessity to inform the public about what “Islam means for Muslims” and creating self-determined spaces for Muslim voices are rather of international nature and indeed common among Muslims in Western countries. Part and parcel of the global “Awakening of Muslim Subjectivity”<sup>27</sup> is certainly that more young Muslims are becoming engaged in Muslim discourses and activities at the local and global level.

Young Portuguese Muslims are not an exception in this respect. Besides the fact that this group of young Portuguese Muslims had been religiously dedicated and, concerning the elder ones among them, engaged in Islamic association work already long before September 11, it is especially during the last years that they are improving their international networking. As mentioned above, they now participate in International networks such as ASMA and the MLT programme which aims to provide platforms for intra-faith conversation among young Muslims on major issues, such as integration, identity struggles, Islamic reactions to secularism, gender equality, among other areas of tension that breed alienation and extremism. The philosophy that informs their approach is that Muslims are part of the solution, and not the problem.

### *Can you get me a girl?*

Only two and a half hours after the dessert was served at the dinner of CilJovem, the restaurant was a little less crowded. Some went window-shopping in the mall, others debated school issues, weddings or that night’s SLB Benfica (Lisbon) versus Marítimo (from Madeira) football match, having receiving the desperately expected scoreline via text messages on their cell phones. It has been a good night (Benfica won) and as is usual on a Saturday night, everybody is nicely dressed especially the young women. Despite the absence of any extremely short mini skirts or visible belly piercings, their diverse outfits and styles are typical of middle class urban European youth these days, with only a few exceptions of girls

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quoting Felix Moos’ “Hello? We are at war?” adding: “indeed, there is a war on; one which some of us are less allowed to forget than others”, pressing the point that anthropological research on Muslims is framed by this context.

<sup>27</sup> AK. VAKIL, & S. SAYYID, “Its politics, stupid”, *The Muslim News*, 210 (Special Supplement), 27 October 2006: 9.

dressed in more traditional Indian dresses alongside a some more expensive lady suits. Four little groupings discuss different locations for further adventures tonight: taste in music and number of available cars (many hail from the suburbs) seems to be decisive. Some boys dressed in light Hip-Hop style finally make up their minds to go and courteously wave goodbye to me. "So, you are still up for some nightclubbing?", I ask, responding to their smile. "Come on, you know that we only celebrate on Fridays. ...", one of them states ironically, and we all laugh.

The young reporter from the student magazine seems to be satisfied after a long and fruitful night's work. We sit down for a talk. "I am so surprised", she says, seemingly tired but happy. "What did you expect?", I ask back. "I don't know, maybe more traditional dress codes and headscarves, less patience for my questions or sophistication in their answers", she admits, "I know these are all prejudices, but really, apart from the darker skin and more consciousness in some political matters, I couldn't distinguish them from other teens and twenties here." While we discuss the common confusion of religion, culture and "Portuguese-ness" in public discourse, a photo-reporter arrives, obviously in a hurry, having nearly missed his opportunity to take some pictures of the group of young Muslims. It is close to midnight and last groups are leaving. The photographer addresses one of the young men at the entrance paying the bill with the restaurant manager, and after some explanation, he is sent to our table to ask the reporter if she could help arrange some dinner guests open for a photograph. She will try, is her hesitant and tired answer. I am packing up my questionnaires, saying goodbye while the photographer prepares his equipment. "Can you get me a girl?", are the last words I can witness while leaving.

Referring to an example from the UK, some members of Portuguese Muslim youth association CijJovem have recently discussed the idea of inaugurating an online platform where Islamophobic attacks and incidents of discrimination can be listed and made public. They might not have many objective reasons to be "happy at home" in current times, but they do feel "at home" in their country: 89% of them agreed strongly with this position. 88% of the young non-Muslims did so as well.

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